

Cody and Jessica Stafford quickly figured out that she was the disciplinarian of the family, but work together as a team when parenting their son Harlan

HIS WAY HER WAY

Katy moms and dads discuss their different discipline styles and share tips for navigating the ups and downs of parenting

Written by Lorrie Crow Kimble | Photography by Sara Isola



It is extremely common for parents to find themselves at opposite ends of the discipline spectrum. Sometimes what you think is best for your child isn't what your spouse considers best. How can Katy parents create consistency when it comes to raising kids?



Together, Matt and Lyndsey Ortiz discuss proper action when deciding consequences for their daughter Matalynn

When Jessica and Cody Stafford were beginning to discipline their son Harlan, they made an important discovery: Cody is a “softie.” “I am probably naturally more laid back,” admits Cody. “Jessica is home with Harlan more often; she is the primary disciplinarian.”

Different Parenting Styles

“Cody doesn’t get as much time with the baby as I do, since he works in the city during the week,” says Jessica. “I think that he’s just so happy to be home with him that he lets him slide on a lot of things when they’re together.”

For example, Harlan likes to play with electrical cords. Jessica says, “I don’t let him, even if they’re unplugged, because I think it’s safer to make all cords off-limits.”

She believes that since a 13-month-old child can’t differentiate between plugged in and not plugged in, playing with cords is a strangulation hazard. “Daddy doesn’t seem to understand why I won’t let Harlan play with unplugged cords under supervision, and I’ve caught him letting him do it when I’m not around,” she says.

Lyndsey Ortiz, mother of Matalynn Grace, 6, says she was surprised to find herself as the easygoing one. “I always thought I’d be the main disciplinarian. But, boy, was I wrong,” confesses Lyndsey. “Mattie got in trouble the other day, and I was only able to talk to her about it when I knew she deserved a spanking.”

Lyndsey’s husband, Matt, says that even though he is the primary disciplinarian, he and Lyndsey talk about what is really necessary. “Then we will take action,” he adds.

Playing Mom and Dad

As a single parent to Kharma, 13, Noah, 7, and Chace, 2, Penelope Luster has to play both roles of disciplinarian. “Most important to me is clarity,” says Luster. “I make sure that family values, rules, and expectations are clear to the kids. This approach eliminates any miscommunication.”

Luster says she has a four-step process when rules are broken that range from a verbal warning where she is clear about where the problem is and allowing them time to correct the problem, to the loss of privileges like iPad, TV, or outside play.

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The Disciplinary Scale

Cody says he likes giving Harlan some freedom to do as he pleases, assuming his son doesn't endanger himself. "My parents acted similarly towards me," recalls Cody.

Lyndsey and Matt found themselves the opposite of their parental discipline scale. "My parents didn't discipline me, but I was rarely in trouble," says Matt. "The one time I got in trouble was when I was trying to hit my brother with a toy, and it accidentally hit my mom in the face."

"I can't believe I'm the opposite of my mom," says Lyndsey who describes her mother as the main disciplinarian who sometimes resorted to spanking. "I was very stubborn and talking to me wasn't going to cut it," she admits.

Luster says her mother was more of a talker than a physical disciplinarian, and she is the same. "I would rather my kids have a full understanding of expectations and goals versus trying to physically bully them into compliance."

"If you have more than one child, you learn pretty quickly that what works for one does not work for all."

- Penelope Luster

Luster adds that she did come from a family of yellors and says her shouting, among other things, was the catalyst behind starting a single parent ministry at her church with the support of her pastor. "The ministry is a place where we learn to apply biblical principles to the rearing of our children," she adds. "It has been a beautiful, amazing blessing. As a family, we have healed and grown stronger."

Agreeing on a Balance

When differing on discipline, Jessica says she tries to respect the fact that men and women are different. "While I am always very concerned with Harlan's safety and comfort, daddy seems more focused on having fun and giving him new and exciting experiences," says Jessica. "I try to remember that there is room for both of those approaches, and to strike a balance."

Even though Harlan is very young, Jessica says they are starting to create some rules and expectations for him. Cody adds, "He understands when things are off limits and when his actions will cause a problem. He is typically told, 'No,' and is sometimes physically removed from the area, depending on what the problem is."

Nobody's Perfect

Luster reminds parents as they discipline that kids are individuals. "If you have more than one child, you learn pretty quickly that what works for one does not work for all," she says. "You have to take the time to learn who your children are and what makes them tick."

Cody believes that making mistakes and pushing the limits is often the best way to learn. However, he adds, "Jessica provides our son with a sense of structure that he would likely lack without her rules, so I try to remind myself that he needs that structure as much as he needs his freedom."

When discipline is given, Matt says he and Lyndsey follow it with love and affection. "We always express confidence in her," he says. "I make sure she knows we all make mistakes, and I know she'll do better next time." KM



LORRIE CROW KIMBLE had a "softie" mom and a "firm" dad. Her

boys claim she was easy on them regarding discipline, but she thinks they're wrong.



Penelope Luster has to be both the disciplinarian and the softie when parenting her three children: Kharma, Noah, and Chase

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